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This overview of the problems facing Harvard College with regard to admissions begins by sketching the history of admissions to the college. Under the heading "Problems of Attraction and Selection," the committee discusses the public images of Harvard, the question of prerequisites, predictive guides, financial aid, the role of the faculty, and the size of the college. In the section on "Questions of Preference and Emphasis," the committee examines pressures bearing on the entire task of selection: geographic, school, and socioeconomic backgrounds of students, transfers, advanced standing, foreign students, Harvard and faculty sons, athletes, and intended field of concentration. The committee offers 19 specific policy recommendations on admissions.

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ADMISSION TO HARVARD COLLEGE

A Report by the Special Committee on College Admission Policy

Faculty of Arts and Sciences

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
FEBRUARY 1960

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I. *INTRODUCTION*

The present report is an effort to achieve two complementary, but separable, purposes. The first of these is to bring into full view the very large number of considerations which bear upon the admission of students to Harvard College. The second is to point out, by means of individual recommendations, certain areas of admission policy in which conscious choices are required, even though many of these choices can best be stated by reaffirming the answers of the past.

The informative, descriptive function of the report calls for a word of explanation. So much has happened in college admissions in recent years, so many quiet yet relentless shifts have occurred in the very ground beneath a once simple structure, that all over the United States institutions of higher learning are currently engaged in asking what these shifts amount to, and what they may portend for the future. Assuming that the task of every such institution is to bring the best available teachers into contact with the best available students, under the best obtainable conditions for teaching and learning, this anxious demand for data about admissions is just as natural as is concern over faculty appointments and curricular experiments. The demand is not only natural, it is commendable, and probably overdue. No single aspect of the admission problem can be intelligently discussed in the absence of information about its other aspects, or, to put the matter another way, without a steady awareness of the number of cross-lines tugging at every specific policy decision. It is too much to hope that every reader of the ensuing pages will agree with the conclusions of this study; but it is not too much to hope that he may know more about admission to Harvard than he did before reading them, and will be able to argue more relevantly for having done so.

With regard to the report's second purpose, that of raising questions and recommending some changes or shifts of emphasis,

the Committee is most anxious that its questions and recommendations not obscure the profound respect which, on all the available evidence, is due the Dean of Admissions and his staff. It would be both unpleasant and misleading to open our discussion without first testifying in uncompromising terms to the intelligence, the fairness and the strength in holding difficult pressures in balance which have characterized the record of Harvard College admissions during the 1950's. Surely we can avoid complacency and yet debate the issues against a background of esteem for the performance of Dean Bender and his associates. An essential element in that very performance, however, has been a clear recognition of the dynamic nature of the entire college admission problem. Constantly evolving demands, and opportunities as well, leave us no choice but to keep looking ahead, applying to a changing situation the lessons of Harvard's long experience.

II. *THE SETTING OF THE PROBLEM*

An aim, if not really an admission policy, was implicit in the founders' determination not to "leave an illiterate Ministery to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the dust." [1] Harvard College thus began by seeking young men destined for the Puritan clergy and capable of absorbing the classical and theological education appropriate to that calling. The first admission requirements were stated as follows in the "Lawes, Liberties and Orders of Harvard College," promulgated in the mid-1640's:

> 1. When any Schollar is able to Read Tully or such like classicall Latine Authour ex tempore, and make and speake true Latin in verse and prose *suo* (*ut aiunt*) *Marte*, and decline perfectly the paradigmes of Nounes and verbes in the Greeke toungue, then may hee bee admitted into the Colledge, nor shall any claime admission before such qualification.[2]

These prerequisites were maintained throughout the colonial period, with the president and tutors examining each candidate

[1] *New Englands First Fruits* (London, 1643), 12.

[2] Quoted by Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, 1935), 333.

orally (save for a written essay in Latin). The selection process can scarcely have been burdensome. The Class of 1671 was proudly described as "great and yet civill," but it numbered just 11. The Class of 1771, when 63 men were graduated, was not matched in size until 1810.[3] By the latter date, alongside the older Latin and Greek requirements had appeared the stipulations that a candidate for admission be

> well versed in a compendium of Geography, & in the part of Arithmetic contained under the heads of Notation, simple and compound Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division, with reduction & the single rule of three.[4]

This is not the place for a detailed review of Harvard's soul-searchings and changes of course during the nineteenth century. It should, however, be observed that the College's power to attract excellent candidates has been far from constant during the past one hundred and fifty years. In the 1830's, for example, the competition of Amherst in the race for gifted applicants had a direct bearing on the creation of the "Lowell Loan Fund" for able but impecunious boys. On July 18, 1865, John Langdon Sibley, Librarian of the College, wrote morosely in his diary:

> Ninety-five students admitted to the Freshman Class. There would have been more; but, among other reasons, that James Mills Peirce has been so exacting in Mathematics it has been impossible for students of ordinary mathematical talents to get the lessons, & many have had their health broken down by the attempt. . . . Another consideration, the expenses here, has had weight. But what has hurt the College much is the unjust circulation of rumors respecting brutality in treatment in hazing new-comers.[5]

In the experimental early years of President Eliot, after the Civil War, Harvard seemed to be losing ground to colleges which continued to offer a safe, fixed curriculum. Then, in the 1880's and '90's, the appeal of the free elective system took hold of the

[3] Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard* (Cambridge, 1937), 40, 102.
[4] Harvard University Archives, Corporation Papers, UA I-5. 120, unsigned letter to Mr. Molton C. Bogess, July 1, 1807.
[5] Harvard University Archives, John Langdon Sibley's Private Journal, (MS.), 71.

public imagination. A college of 563 students in 1869–70 numbered 1,077 by 1886–87 and 2,238 by 1908–09. Not surprisingly, the turn of the century was a time of lively debate within, as well as between, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Governing Boards over standards for admission. Acrimony there was in plenty, but an acrimony which bespoke confidence in strength.

Though it is useful to bear in mind certain powerful traditions bequeathed by the first two-and-a-half centuries of Harvard's existence, it is nonetheless essential to recognize in the last sixty to sixty-five years the specific historical background of our present admission problems. The reforms of 1898, permitting greater choice among subjects offered for examination, while demanding higher levels of performance in those chosen by each candidate, represented more than an effort to influence secondary education. Whether or not it was fully realized at the time, the debates over those reforms also ushered in a new era in the College's relationship to the applicant group. Harvard could no longer relax behind a series of hedge rows, each representing a formal requirement to be met by all would-be freshmen, nor could it henceforth welcome without exception those who had clambered over the hedges. Instead, the assumption that the College should admit all candidates who (a) met the stated prerequisites and (b) could either afford full tuition or could qualify for financial aid was beginning to encounter a new consideration: whom should Harvard choose from those qualified under (a) and (b)? With the introduction of this consideration, questions of active admission *policy* started to crowd, however slowly at the outset, into what had long been the preserve of passive admission *requirements*.

It would be wrong, of course, to exaggerate the abruptness with which the need to pick and choose presented itself during the early decades of the century. As late as 1933, out of 1,297 applicants for admission to the Class of 1937, 1,059 (81.6%) were accepted. It was at just about that point in time, however, that the first notes were struck in today's still mounting crescendo of competitive admission. For it was the Thirties which saw the American public, under the multiple impact of the Great De-

pression, changing social values and technical demands for greater professional specialization, begin to emphasize college training to a degree which gave at least some hint of the clamor awaiting the mid-twentieth century. It was also the Thirties which saw the launching of President Conant's National Scholarship Program, a major effort to make Harvard more truly a national institution in terms not only of reputation, but also of composition.

Even before the end of World War II, it was becoming clear that Harvard could never again view the problem of admissions as essentially one of combining minimum academic requirements with a modest selectivity designed, as one uncommonly indiscreet Dean of the College had said not many years before, "to bring us as many as possible of the very rich and the very bright." The rush of applications after 1945 could be partly explained by the G. I. Bill of Rights; but the term of that legislation has expired, and the rush goes on. The assumption that a college education is all but indispensable for trades and callings once divorced from anything academic is today matched by an apparently spreading public conviction that the degrees granted by certain institutions represent negotiable paper of unique value, not to mention status honor.

Steeply increased pressure in just the past few years thus becomes the most immediate element in the setting of our problem. In 1952, 3,089 boys applied for admission to the Class of 1956. This was 363 more than the previous year's figure; but even so, it was possible to admit 62.8%, or 1,940, in order to secure an actual "admitted-registered" group of 1,222 the following September. By 1955, three classes later, the number of final applicants (allowing for 176 applications which were withdrawn prior to Committee action) had climbed to 3,992, of whom only 48% could be admitted. In 1958, for the Class of 1962, 4,030 final applications had to be sifted, and 38.9% of the candidates were admitted. The trend continued in 1959, as will be repeatedly pointed out in the present report. It is worth adding (though obviously this was not known when the Special Committee was appointed in March 1959) that during 1959–60 applications have been received at a rate which indicates a total of more than

5,000 candidates for admission to the Class of 1964. In all probability, not many more than 30% of this year's applicants can be accepted by the College.

Even so abbreviated a survey may help to explain how Harvard arrived last spring at the decision to undertake a study of admission problems and policies. The apparent freedom to select poses an inescapable challenge to clarify the bases of selection. It poses a slightly less obvious, but equally significant question: from what kind of applicants do we have the chance to do our selecting? It requires hard thinking about the use of scholarship funds and about calculated risk-taking in admissions, as both bear on the national "talent hunt." It invites the charge that Harvard does not attract the most promising future scientists, for example, and then does not choose the best of those who do apply. It impinges directly on the issue of the size of the College.

Harvard has often been wrong and, still more often, haughty. What has repeatedly helped it to recover from its mistakes has been the fact that, despite widespread impressions to the contrary, it has rarely been self-satisfied. There is nothing peculiar in the present attempt at self-evaluation, set in a broad national context. In fact, if Harvard were not now asking questions about admission policy, both in Cambridge and all across the United States, *that* would be peculiar.

III. *WHAT CAN AN ADMISSION POLICY ACHIEVE?*

One of the most popular of current phrases applied to the problem of college admissions is "the search for an ideal class." The Committee emphatically rejects that formulation. In so doing, it proposes that our attention continue to be directed toward promising individuals and not toward a corporate entity which never exists in fact, and only makes trouble as a Platonic standard of failure when applied to any actual combination of students admitted. The proposition that a high degree of mixture, in both backgrounds and interests, is desirable in the student body rightly imposes a check on any total indifference toward the composition of entering classes. The Committee endorses that proposi-

tion, however, only in the belief that such mixture helps to enrich the educational experience of individual students.

Recommendation 1.

In judging all applications for admission, primary attention should be paid to the qualities and promise of the individual applicants, without reference to any preconceived notion of an "ideal class."

Substantive definitions may change; but it is unlikely that we can, or should, radically alter the old and tested rule that the man to bring to Harvard is the man who can make the most of what Harvard has to offer. This rule obviously implies expectations of intellectual competence and moral quality which must be maintained, for the sake of all parties involved. In the stern phrases of six decades ago, a committee of the Board of Overseers in 1898 put the matter thus:

> Without, of course, losing sight of other ends, in the opinion of the Committee, the *primary* purpose of entrance examinations to Harvard College is to exclude from the College students incapable of profiting by its instruction. . . . The admission . . . of any boy exceptionally dull or too indolent or vicious for serious study is a hardship and an injustice to his fellow students, to his teachers and to the University itself.[6]

A present-day reader might wish to add that an unwise admission is also "a hardship and an injustice" to the boy himself. The same reader might further deplore the strongly negative tone of the statement, with its dark forebodings of an imminent inundation by boors, some of them vicious. Nevertheless, the challenge to pick students who are capable of profiting from instruction in an exacting university college still confronts us. We are seeking individuals of high promise, not primarily as "leaders" in any simple sense (unless we also propose to admit the requisite proportion of followers), but as young men whose qualities of mind and character offer the most hopeful augury of distinguished service to society.

The ultimate goal of any admission policy for this College is,

[6] Harvard University Archives, Reports to the Overseers, UA II, 10.7.1.

we repeat, to put Harvard's strengths to the best possible service of the nation by selecting and training those candidates best fitted to take advantage of what Harvard has to offer. It is important to bear in mind that there are a large number of other excellent colleges and universities, all entitled to claim particular strengths of their own. All are well able to provide instruction in standard undergraduate fields and to introduce students to the benefits and amenities of American college life. Students we may turn away because of particular admission criteria will almost certainly go to other institutions and there receive good educations. Our concern, therefore, is not simply whether a given applicant would benefit from being at Harvard, but whether he is one of those individuals for whom Harvard can do something not available elsewhere. To deprive a man of the opportunity to attend Harvard is a serious matter, from a national viewpoint, only with respect to those individuals who could profit uniquely from having been at Harvard. On the other hand, any policy which did exclude such individuals would do a disservice to the nation, as well as an injustice to the individuals themselves.

What do we feel is special about Harvard's offering? No two American universities possess exactly the same mixture of attributes. Harvard's particular combination includes, among other elements, a balanced faculty of international standing, an intense atmosphere of research activity, excellent physical facilities, freedom from political interference and considerable power to select from promising applicants. There is neither need nor occasion for claims of superiority, but there *is* a need to ask what kind of College is set in this University. We shall be doing both ourselves and the public an injustice if we fail to recognize clearly and state unequivocally that Harvard's advantages lie, above all, in the realm of the intellect.

Recommendation 2.

The Admission and Scholarship Committee (elsewhere referred to as the Admission Committee) deserves support for its policy of admitting no candidate unless he appears to possess the requisite intellectual ability to take advantage of the opportunities and to meet the demands inherent in under-

graduate education for a highly selected student body forming part of a university community.

Thus, in making final admission choices, we must opt for intellectual promise. The definition of what we mean by true intellect, what we regard as intellectuality at its best, is no less difficult than the delineation of intelligence itself, the active element (one might almost say the raw material) of disciplined intellect. Regardless, however, of the terms used to describe them, there are certain qualities of mind which transcend precision, retentiveness and logical consistency, qualities such as the ability to perceive the most complex relationships, incisiveness and originality in the formulation of questions, unorthodox daring in the search for answers. They characterize some few individuals just as significantly, though not so obviously, as great physical beauty or remarkable strength or speed may characterize others. Where such qualities of mind are detected, or even suspected on the basis of pre-college performance, the admission decision can scarcely be in question. Notice, however, that this does not apply to the literally thousands of *intelligent* candidates Harvard now considers each year. It applies only to the small number of candidates (small because the total number in the entire nation appears to be relatively minute) who show truly *exceptional* promise of creative achievement in the future. As one member of the Committee put the matter, early in our deliberations: "Harvard must keep trying to push its top one percent of brilliant students up to two percent, of comparable quality."

The percentages cited are obviously symbolic, but they help to illustrate the fact that this search for exceptional intellectual promise is only a part of the College's whole responsibility. There are many young men who are not destined to win Nobel prizes and who will not accomplish "break-throughs" in any field of scholarship, but who nevertheless exhibit strengths which can make them important contributors to the life of their country and their time. Beside the qualities of mind discussed in the preceding paragraph, the Committee would place the warmth, tenacity, moral courage and practical judgment which make men

outstanding in government and business, in the liberal professions and the arts, even though they would never achieve distinction in the library or the laboratory. We want applicants of this kind too, both because of what they can do for Harvard and because of what Harvard may be able to help them do for others, in widening circles, throughout their lives. If it be charged that Harvard College is greedy for quality, of many different kinds, the Committee suggests a willing plea of "guilty."

If we ask how best to select from the applicants who present themselves, our answer can only be to build a solid floor, while refusing to clamp on a restrictive ceiling. Minimum standards need to be high, very high in national terms, given the present competition for admission to the College. Otherwise, a large number of excellent young men will be defeated by the demands of a Harvard education, after having displaced other excellent young men who could have met those same demands. In this respect, firmness in saying a well-considered "no" should never be confused with unkindness. At the same time, there exists an obvious danger of becoming exclusively concerned with safe minimums and prerequisites, to the detriment of the matching consideration: how far should we reach for unevenly developed talent? No policy, baldly stated, can answer that question. More serious, a written report bears in itself, by virtue of being written and disseminated at all, the danger of implied rigidity, or apparent hostility to the intelligent chance-taking which must remain the golden talent of college admissions. The Committee urges that the faculty give its full support to just such chance-taking by the admissions staff on any application which satisfies minimum precautions and in which there is a strong hint of warmth, originality and good motivation.

Repeatedly in the course of its investigation, the Committee has encountered a particular attitude, widespread in the faculty and outside groups as well. It embodies a demand that *admission decisions* do what only a *college education* itself can perform, i.e., select and develop the distinguished citizens of the future. Obviously, this is unrealistic — how can anyone be absolutely

sure which among several thousand teen-age boys are destined for the highest future distinction? Furthermore, it tends to shift the responsibility away from the college teacher, who really cannot avoid it without abdicating his vocation. To refrain from asking more of an admissions staff than it can reasonably be asked to deliver might be considered the beginning of a faculty member's delivery of what he can quite fairly ask of himself.

Harvard must offer a broad hospitality to talent. It should admit no freshman who seems unlikely to meet the standards set by the College and by his own contemporaries, but it should continue to define promise in the broadest possible terms. We must direct our efforts toward training our share — and historically it has been a substantial share — of the truly brilliant members of American society. We should not forget, however, that in the process of providing the best possible base for the launching of such careers, we can also give society a worthy supply of capable, alert and open-minded citizens. In any case, we should view our admissions in the light of a simple remark by the late Bernard Berenson '87: "[My years at Harvard] set the trajectory that I followed all the rest of my life." [7]

Recommendation 3.

Despite the probability that for the foreseeable future the total number of applications for admission will continue to increase, Harvard should go on making every effort to attract candidates who offer the highest promise of distinguished intellectual achievement.

Recommendation 4.

The University should undertake an investigation of possible correlations between admission data and outstanding performances by Harvard graduates in all fields of human endeavor. Such an investigation should be posited on the assumption that while Harvard produces many good citizens, it has a major responsibility to go on producing some great ones.

[7] As quoted in the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, 62:224 (November 28, 1959), from United Press International.

IV. *PROBLEMS OF ATTRACTION AND SELECTION*

Having pondered in quite abstract terms what we are seeking to achieve, we should consider several practical problems which affect the composition of our applicant group and our ability to make wise choices from among those who do apply. It would be a grave mistake to assume that Harvard has outgrown all concern for recruiting. We are, after all, still dependent on the self-selection of those candidates who choose to run, so to speak; and we cannot relax our efforts to attract as many as possible of the nation's very ablest and best motivated boys. As already stated in Recommendation 3, above, Harvard cannot afford to feel smug about the pool of clearly first-rate candidates from whom we choose. The size of that pool is easy to exaggerate. It will doubtless never be more than a fraction of the applicant group, but every increase in the size of the fraction is a step forward.

A. *The Public Image(s) of Harvard.*

Every college or university does a certain amount of worrying about the view taken of it by the general public. Much more to the point, it is concerned about the stereotypes which may influence the advice given by school guidance counselors, the ambitions of parents and the inclinations of possible candidates for admission, as they make up their respective minds where to apply. It might well be argued that Harvard has little to complain of in this connection. Comparative surveys regularly show that we are getting a look at an increasing number of boys who have the intellectual qualifications to meet the highest demands of a college education.

Nevertheless, the very reputation which has helped to produce the almost fantastic pattern of College Entrance Examination Board scores described in Part IV, Section E, below, imposes some difficulties of its own. Who can say how many gifted youngsters are frightened away from Harvard, simply because of bad advice or their own timidity? It is doubtful that our pluralistic notions of "promise" in applicants can ever be communicated to more than a minority of the American people. Even

when it is known in a given town that one of the locality's recent valedictorians applied to Harvard, was admitted and is doing well in the College, such knowledge scarcely shakes the conviction that that is the only type of boy, perhaps one per decade, who should try. By continuing to work with school counselors, however, we can at least reduce this kind of loss. The difficulty of combining high standards with a desire to see as many as we can of the country's ablest and best motivated college aspirants is one of the most obvious strains with which Harvard has to live. The danger of freezing out first-rate candidates is as much with us as is the survival of chilly Puritan prose in some of our official announcements.

In at least two respects, within strict limits, the situation appears to the Committee more favorable than many members of the faculty may suppose. By and large, there is nothing sinister about a public image which concedes to Harvard an unswerving determination to keep intellectual values uppermost in its decisions. Even the rather complicated vision, sometimes encountered, of a university at once "snobbish" and "radical" at least testifies to the difficulty of calling it any one, simple, closed kind of place. Those who reject the ground rules of freedom quite reasonably distrust free education, but we have no policy changes to recommend on that account. Such modifications of emphasis in public relations as the Committee will recommend have nothing to do with altering the standards which must govern the life of a great university.

A second respect in which we appear to be doing much better than some critics have suggested concerns the attraction and selection of future scientists. A very serious question has been raised as to whether or not the Harvard admission system discriminates against potential scientists. There are two pieces of evidence which indicate that it does not. One is the fact that roughly half the freshmen in recent entering classes have declared their intention to concentrate in some field of science (see below, page 54). The second is the frankly stated opinion of science professors in a number of excellent colleges to the effect that Harvard is already getting more than its share of the avail-

able talent. An important factor contributing to this pattern has been the picture of Harvard presented, both by words and by photographs, in the "Rollo" booklet, officially entitled *Information about Harvard College for Prospective Students.* That picture, as regards balance and completeness, has unquestionably been improved by recent revisions; but keeping it thoroughly up-to-date will pose a continuing challenge for the future.

Even now, there is no room for complacency. The training of scientists and scholars in the United States is lagging far behind the increasingly critical need. We are engaged in a desperate race, not only with possible military adversaries, but also with problems of overpopulation, disease and shortages of food, energy and raw materials, to mention only a few. The need for scientists will become progressively more acute as we proceed further into a century which has already seen science upset many of the very bases on which human life and culture have rested for thousands of years. So too will the need for interpretation by social scientists and humanists. On all fronts, the urgent demand for highly gifted and highly trained Americans is unblinkable.

It would, in short, be a mistake to leave the general topic of Harvard's public image without re-emphasizing its undeniable importance as a topic for continuing investigation. There seems to be little reason, *a priori*, to doubt that whenever a graduate interviewer gives a false impression of Harvard standards, whenever a school principal concludes that Harvard is not interested in his type of school, whenever a Harvard professor is quoted as having made a supercilious remark, some damage is done to the broad appeal the College needs and wants to maintain. Beyond that general assertion we can scarcely go until there has been a much more systematic study of the public image question than the time and resources available to this Committee would permit. The Committee believes that such a study should be launched by the University, with all the thoroughness and sophistication of research technique it obviously deserves.

Recommendation 5.

Harvard should undertake a careful investigation of its public image or images, with special regard for the problem

of "self-selection" on the part of potential candidates for admission.

B. *The Influence of Financial Aids.*

In Part V, Section C, more specific attention will be given to certain questions relating to the use of financal aids. At this point, however, it seems appropriate to suggest that one of our most urgent needs is for clarity as to what we hope to do, through the use of funds, to attract students who can contribute the most to Harvard and can make the most of the opportunities it provides. Most Ivy League and other comparable colleges have for years been using their scholarship and loan moneys on the basis of a number of assumptions which now call for re-examination. It is no more than fair to attest to the combination of humanity, intelligent guesswork and competitive shrewdness with which those assumptions have been applied. However, the Committee feels that the relationship between recruiting and financial aids will require constant re-evaluation over a number of years ahead, as experience accumulates.

Specifically, it appears that the small scholarship, as a determinant of college choice on the part of top-notch candidates, may today be far less important than it was earlier, perhaps even as recently as the 1940's. This does not mean that an honorary scholarship from Harvard may not still flatter a good applicant into accepting admission; but several recent studies indicate that the grant of $100 or even $400 to an applicant whose family can pay the rest of our present-day budget of $2,750 per year for resident students is essentially icing on the cake, *not* the decisive factor in his final choice of college. The Committee has been impressed by arguments to the effect that increased use of loans in these relatively small need cases would permit a correspondingly higher investment of gift money in applicants who cannot conceivably attend Harvard, however promising they may be, without substantial monetary support. The University should throw all the weight it commands behind the intelligent use of educational loans, student employment and other possible means of self-help. The simple fact is that the traditional alternatives of "paying

one's way" or "winning a full scholarship" do not begin to meet the still growing fiscal problems of higher education in the mid-twentieth century.

Recommendation 6.

Every effort should be made, as additional scholarship funds become available, to enable an increasing proportion of deserving candidates who are admitted to receive the financial aid they need in order to accept admission to Harvard.

Recommendation 7.

While increasing and using gift aid to best advantage, Harvard should do all in its power to encourage and increase the wise use of financial self-help, including loans, summer earnings and term-time employment, as a supplement to the scholarship program.

C. *The Question of Stated Prerequisites.*

In a very general way, Harvard has historically moved away from sharply defined prerequisites for admission at about the same rate, and in the same degree, that it has moved away from the fixed curriculum within the College. The qualification "very general" is important, because long after President Eliot's curricular reforms had been accepted, Harvard still required a rigid set of proofs that certain subjects had been mastered before an applicant could be considered; and even in the course of the twentieth century, there have been several reversals of policy on this point. Nevertheless, the shift which began in 1898, toward fewer specifications and higher expectations in fields of the candidate's choice, was absolutely crucial. Without yielding blindly to the past, we must say that Harvard is still operating on the basis of a swing toward quality, as opposed to coverage. Put differently, this emphasis might be characterized as a preference for the *possible maximum* of academic performance, over the *guaranteed minimum.*

Our present requirements for admission, as publicly announced, are: "(1) satisfactory completion of secondary school; (2) the school's recommendation that the candidate is academically and morally fitted for Harvard; (3) a satisfactory record on the

Scholastic Aptitude Test and three Achievement Tests given by the College Entrance Examination Board." In elaboration of this statement, the booklet of *Information about Harvard College* adds:

> While there are no rigidly prescribed subject matter or course or unit prerequisites for consideration for admission, ideal secondary school preparation for Harvard would include the following:
>
> 1. Four years of English with constant training in writing.
> 2. Four years of mathematics for most students.
> 3. Four or more years of foreign language study. (It is highly desirable to carry at least one language to the point of reasonable mastery, which means normally through four years of secondary school; two years each of two languages is usually unsatisfactory since rarely can the student use the language after only two years of study.)
> 4. Two or more years of history, of which one should be American history and one the history of another country or countries and another time.
> 5. One or more years of laboratory science. (Prospective physical science or engineering concentrators should carry their mathematics as far as possible in secondary school and take both physics and chemistry if possible.)
> 6. Some study of music or art or both.
>
> The ideal secondary school program described above may need to be modified for a candidate in the light of his particular talents and goals and of what is available in his school. Schools vary greatly in their standards and curricula, and the Admission Committee is more interested in the quality of the record and the quality of the applicant than in a simple quantitative evaluation. The stronger the basic power and promise of the candidate the more willing the Committee is to overlook some weaknesses or deficiencies in the content of the candidate's preparation.

A sizable number of faculty members have in recent years asked for greater precision in specifying formal demonstrations of achievement in key subjects, as requirements for the admission of future Harvard students. The present Committee has no intention of flatly rejecting, once and for all, the arguments adduced to support this demand. Nevertheless, there is need to underline the dangers which such a policy would, at present, carry with its admirable aims.

What would happen, for example, if we required four years of

secondary school training in mathematics and three years of a foreign language? A study of school records and College Board achievement scores suggests that some 40% in each of the most recent five or six entering classes would either not have been admissible, if the language requirement alone had been in force, or would have had to be admitted with complicated provisions for meeting the requirement subsequently, on the basis of courses taken without credit toward the A.B. The other possibility, of course, is that these same students, whom we *have* considered admissible, would never have applied.

Are we prepared to accept this cutting off of access to talent across the country? We might be, if it could be shown that the students thus turned away, or discouraged in advance, constituted the less able segments of their respective classes, in all respects. The Committee feels constrained to point out, however, that nothing could be further from the truth. A four-year mathematics requirement would have kept out of Harvard no fewer than 126 of the 344 students who graduated *summa cum laude* or *magna cum laude* in the Classes of 1957 and 1958 (comparable statistics not yet available for 1959). The three-year secondary school language requirement would have excluded 127 of the same select group, including some, or course, who would also have failed to meet the prescribed standard in mathematics. Under present conditions, such cost appears prohibitive.

To say that we cannot now accept the effects of sharply defined prerequisites is not, however, to say that this field offers no hope of constructive agitation. It is true that much time is lost at the college level because of the need to teach sub-college courses. It is also true that numerous private preparatory schools would make every effort to help their students satisfy a formal redefinition of Harvard's expectations. For the rest, however, it is important to be realistic about Harvard's influence. Most public high schools, from which we currently draw many of our ablest students, would not respond, simply because Harvard admissions do not loom large enough in their own considerations of educational and fiscal policy. Of the 629 different schools from which Harvard drew 1,213 entering freshmen in the class of 1963, 593

sent between one and four graduates apiece — only 36 schools sent five or more. We cannot afford to exclude top-notch candidates by demanding subjects their schools do not provide. Even state universities such as Michigan and California, despite frankly selective admission standards, feel the need to move cautiously in dealing with local high schools.

The one great hope, a very old one, is that Harvard may encourage higher standards in the secondary schools by honoring them whenever encountered in individual applications. More than that, we should welcome and support wise efforts by institutions having the requisite local power to push secondary school training toward higher levels of training in modern languages, mathematics and other "tool subjects" of general relevance to success in college.

Recommendation 8.

Harvard College should not, at this time, adopt a set of formal prerequisites for admission, stated in terms either of secondary school courses or of prescribed scores on achievement tests. It should, however, take an active part in any well-conceived general effort in this direction which may be undertaken in the future, particularly with respect to English, mathematics and foreign languages.

D. *Predicted Rank List.*

The assignment to each applicant of a Predicted Rank List figure (PRL) has proven to be the best procedure currently available for at least the preliminary classification of admission candidates. Like every other predictive index, the PRL is least dependable in the in-between cases which combine uneven combinations of grades in secondary school courses and College Board scores. Erroneous guesses are so striking when they occur that it may be worth noting immediately that over two-thirds of recent Harvard graduates have compiled grade averages within one Rank List Group, i.e., within about one-half a letter grade, of their respective PRL's. It is, in other words, easy to pass over predictive hits, or near hits, and to concentrate on misses.

The Committee asserts its general confidence in the PRL, with one reservation, which requires a brief preliminary explanation.

Predicted Rank List is calculated differently for applicants from public and from independent schools, as experience has shown it should be. In the former case, rank in high school class receives a weighting of 55%; College Board *verbal* aptitude score, 20%; and combined scores on the three College Board *achievement* tests, 25%. For private school graduates, rank in class is weighted less heavily, 45%; the verbal aptitude score, 15%; and the combined achievement scores, 40%. This difference, resting on careful performance studies, seeks to make allowance for the much greater variety of abilities represented in most public high schools than in the majority of private schools. It has, however, occasionally been suggested that neither of the two formulas for computing the PRL gives sufficient weight to mathematical, and potentially scientific, capacity. It could be quickly and truthfully said in reply that throughout the whole applicant group, verbal and mathematical aptitude scores show a high positive correlation. In addition, applicants interested in science usually take at least two achievement tests in mathematics or science, so that these subjects do enter into the calculation (very prominently in the case of private school graduates). Nevertheless, the mere possibility of misjudging scientific talent under the present system suggests that we should investigate the potential value of an alternative, more heavily mathematical, PRL.

Recommendation 9.

A staff study should examine the possible advantages of assigning every applicant for admission two Predicted Rank List figures, one using as its criterion the four-year college grade average without respect to field of concentration (and thus presumably the more applicable to non-science concentrators), the other using the four-year college grade average of concentrators in the scientific fields.

Where the PRL encounters its highest percentage of misses is in rating too favorably the candidate with relatively good Board scores, but poor rank in school class. That is to say, a boy who enters Harvard with several aptitude and achievement scores in the high 600's or even in the 700's, but whose school record is studded with C's and D's, is about as likely to have trouble here as

is any save the very weakest of admitted candidates. It would be foolish to advise the Dean of Admissions and his staff regarding the specific weight to be accorded rank in class at the secondary level, as a check on the PRL; but there seems to be considerable evidence that the former figure, especially in combination with whatever experience has shown about the school in question, deserves a close, separate scrutiny when the decision to admit or reject is made.

Having expressed, with only limited reservations, its confidence in the PRL as an implement for the rough classification of admission cases, the Committee still feels that it should place before the faculty the following statistics, which show the PRL spread for the total applicant group in the spring of 1959, as well as for those admitted and rejected from that group:

PREDICTED RANK LIST DISTRIBUTION — CLASS OF 1963

PRL	*Total Applicants*	*Admitted*	*Registered*	*Rejected*	*Percentage Rejected*
2.4 and better	161	134	110	27	16.8
2.5–2.9	496	319	223	177	35.7
3.0–3.4	801	446	340	355	44.3
3.5–3.9	917	359	271	558	60.8
4.0–4.4	730	174	142	556	76.2
4.5–4.9	462	75	63	387	83.8
5.0 and below	261	24	21	237	90.8
No data for PRL available	327	65	43	262	80.4
Total	4,155	1,596	1,213	2,559	61.6

The Committee itself was initially divided as to the wisdom of including the above figures in this survey. Against their inclusion, it was possible to argue that the table's chief message appears to concern *rejection*, a negative process, as opposed to the positive notion of *selection*. Furthermore, the only way in which one might fully explicate such data would be to examine innumerable cases, one by one. Even that procedure would have only limited validity, since it could never recapture all the arguments considered by a large group of men, the Admission Committee, al-

most a year ago. Finally, and most serious, the fact that 204 applicants with PRL's of 2.9 or better (27 with 2.4 or better) were not admitted to the Class of 1963 might conceivably trigger quick charges of discrimination against, or lack of respect for, the purest academic promise. The Special Committee does not believe that there has been such discrimination or lack of respect; but a majority of its members feel that the faculty should have the statistics in question and be asked to weigh them carefully, in the full context of the present report.

In order to settle the question of field distribution among the 204 rejected candidates with predictions of better than 3.0, it seems advisable to present another brief table:

REJECTED APPLICANTS WITH PRL'S OF 2.9 OR BETTER BY INDICATED FIELD OF CONCENTRATION— CLASS OF 1963

Field	*Applicants*	*Rejected*	*Percentage Rejected*
Biological Sciences	93	36	38.7
Physical Sciences	249	79	31.7
Engineering	34	9	26.5
Humanities	152	32	20.8
Social Sciences	91	42	46.2
Undecided	9	6	66.7
Total	628	204	32.5

Notice that although the rate of rejection of those within this category of candidates who announced their intention to concentrate in the Biological Sciences was relatively high, that for the Social Sciences was much higher, while the rates for both the Physical Sciences and Engineering, not to mention the Humanities, were lower than the average for the group as a whole. There does not, in short, appear to be any significant pattern, so far as distribution by field is concerned.

There still remains to be faced the ostensibly simple fact that 32.5% of the applicants with PRL's pointing to Dean's List performance were nevertheless rejected. As already noted, it is impossible to recreate all aspects of the decision-making process;

and in any event, the evocation of individual cases would be out of place in a report on policy. A summary examination of these rejected applications, however, suggests that a rough distinction should be made between the negative decisions on PRL's of 2.4 or better and the same action on PRL's of between 2.5 and 2.9. In the former group, practically every one of the 27 folders contains some strong and quite specific negative evidence, often an explicit warning by a principal, headmaster or school guidance counselor that the applicant in question, despite his high course grades and test scores, seems unlikely to succeed at Harvard. While there are similarly concrete warnings in some of the 177 folders of rejectees in the 2.5–2.9 category as well, at this level the decision appears more often to have gone against the candidate because of a certain blankness in the record, an absence of strong support from referees best situated to evaluate the applicant's resiliency, honesty and promise in other than the most limited academic sense.

The Committee does not maintain, nor does it believe Dean Bender and his staff would maintain, that no applicant of high academic promise is mistakenly turned away and that every gamble on a relatively weak PRL pays off. On the contrary, the point to be made is that *every* admission to Harvard College is in some degree a gamble, to be taken on the basis of all available evidence. The PRL is only one, albeit important, piece of such evidence. Even among candidates who are admitted, those who ultimately perform at more than one Rank List Group above or below the prediction (about one-third of each class, it will be recalled) are a constant reminder that this is a general guide, not an infallible index. Even stronger reminders are the academic failures with PRL's around 2.5 and the occasional *magna cum laude* with a PRL of 4.5.

It is worth repeating that the faculty has the right and the responsibility to ponder all the evidence here presented. This is especially true because in the issue of the PRL and its uses the difficulty of selecting on the basis of a mixture of "objective" indicators and intangible evidence is exemplified in its most dramatic form. The Committee believes that Harvard's remarkably low

attrition rate after entrance — if present proportions do not change sharply, 80–85% of this year's entering class will receive their A.B.'s in 1963 and over 90% will do so eventually — is itself a tribute to the success of the Office of Admissions in discharging its often baffling task. Certainly no very persuasive case can be made for a total surrender to the tyranny of the "little numbers."

E. *Other Predictive Guides.*

This leads directly into another difficult question: what use can be made of College Entrance Examination Board scores? A good deal, it would appear, despite the charge that these tests are too different from Harvard's essay examinations and term papers to provide any real guidance with respect to probable success in Cambridge. As long as we admitted boys with very low scores, such scores were useful in identifying cases to be watched with special care; and low scores still help to eliminate the clearly inadmissible. As a predictor of academic success at Harvard today, however, high scores do less well, for a simple reason inherent in the whole competitive trend of recent years, namely, that we now admit very few applicants whose Board scores do not initially point to success. In the Harvard Class of 1963 the *median* Scholastic Aptitude Verbal score (SAT) is 676 and the *median* Mathematical Aptitude score (MAT) is 691. This means that the upper half of the entering class, in terms of these scores, falls in the top 3–4% of the total national group tested by the College Board and in the top 1–2% of their contemporaries in secondary school last year. On the basis of verbal aptitude, the upper 90% of this entering class fall within the top 5% of last year's secondary school seniors in the country and, on the basis of mathematical aptitude, within the top 9% of the same group. Perhaps even more significant for purposes of immediate comparison, the 10th percentile of the Class of 1963 is equivalent to the 40th percentile of the Class of 1956 in Board-tested mathematical aptitude, and to the 45th in verbal. Skill in taking such tests may be emerging as a national attribute. More likely, the real change has occurred in the self-selection of candidates who apply to Harvard — that,

plus improvements in some secondary training which we should be quick to acknowledge.

The difficulty arising from narrowing of the "test band" still remains. How can we identify and eliminate the college failures among so select a group? The best advice suggests that we cannot. Of 41 freshmen who in 1958–59 either were "fired" for academic reasons (32) or withdrew while in unsatisfactory standing (9), 22 had verbal aptitude scores and 22, mathematical aptitude scores (with some overlap) *above the class median*. Only 5 of 41 had SAT's in the lowest tenth of the class, and only 4 had MAT's in the lowest tenth. Our academic failures are in many instances plunging down out of the more promising levels of each entering class, as identified by the College Board results. Seasoned students of this problem, all across the country, agree that once the really low scorers have been denied admission, as they are at Harvard, prediction of failure within the sample that remains is all but impossible. We must keep on trying, but we can scarcely escape the disappointments of high-pressure competition and selection.

Three possible "controls" are, in the opinion of the Committee, much less valuable than their respective proponents have claimed. First, the single admission interview, while it may identify an occasional candidate of either exceptional charm or hopeless disabilities, seldom reveals the boy of high intelligence, some shrewdness and deep psychological or emotional weaknesses. Nor, be it said, is such an interview likely to identify the clumsy genius. Second, certain standardized personality tests of tolerance, humor, social sensitivity and other characteristics not evaluated by the College Board appear to deserve our continuing interest; but even the best of such indicators, given the difficulty of eliminating calculated "cheating," have yet to demonstrate a significantly higher correlation with academic success than do the College Board aptitude and achievement examinations. (There is also the philosophical problem: should "attitudes" be used as a basis for admission to an educational institution?) Third, the controlled essay recently adopted by the College Board, a prose exercise to be written under examination conditions and for-

warded (unevaluated) by photocopy to all colleges receiving a given applicant's scores, should not be used too freely as a test of inadmissibility. Such an essay may well reveal grounds for rejecting certain candidates; but it might also, unless employed with care and realism, penalize some very good students whose only fault had been bad luck in previous English instruction. We are entitled to hope, on the other hand, that it may, if accepted by Harvard, identify an occasional applicant who is much brighter and more original than his other credentials indicate.

The Committee would like nothing better than to be able to make some flat, confident statements about choosing candidates in terms of test scores, rank in class, interviews, essays and all the rest of the mingled evidence. We feel that the PRL, perhaps slightly elaborated, does a much better job than scattered, dramatic mistakes might suggest. Even more strongly, we feel that all predictive guides essentially set minimum levels below which it is unsafe, and inhumane, to go. Above those minimums, the College must accept the risks, and welcome the opportunities, of intensive selection.

F. *The Admission Calendar.*

No faculty group, the Committee feels, should try to say much about administrative procedures. At present, Harvard admissions demand a punishing routine of travel and interviewing by the staff during the fall and winter of each year, followed by still more grueling weeks of folder reading and, finally, by the April meetings, at which the bulk of the decisions must be made. If the participants feel that they can and must undergo this ordeal, non-participants are in a poor position to complain. If, on the other hand, the Dean of Admissions should ever be able to agree with competing institutions on a somewhat looser calendar, the faculty should be prepared to support such liberalization.

Harvard regularly advises certain schools, which send numerous candidates, of each applicant's chances of admission, using an A-B-C rating scale. This should not be confused with the early

commitment system administered by some colleges which, under a general intercollegiate agreement, give selected candidates assurance of admission (if those candidates have certified the college in question as their first choice) and require a deposit from the applicant as a pledge of acceptance. The Committee feels that our advising of schools may assist in the intelligent counseling of applicants with regard to other college plans, but that Harvard can, and should, rely on the applicants who choose it in the full knowledge of other admission possibilities.

Recommendation 10.

The College should continue to reject any system requiring that a candidate commit himself to accept admission before he has learned of the action taken by other institutions to which he may have applied.

G. *The Role of the Faculty.*

The best way in which to combine faculty demands and judgments with the hard, specialized task of admitting good students will always be a subject for debate. Simple proof of that fact lies in the immense variety of faculty-staff relationships in colleges all over the country. In some places, a few dedicated teachers bear the whole load of advising on admission. In other places, the professional staff does practically all of the individual selecting, but refers marginal cases to a changing panel of professors. In still others, faculty members or their representatives, sometimes designated *ex officio* (division chairmen, for example) are convened only occasionally, to discuss broad questions of policy.

During the past few years, the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences has had more to say about admission to the College than it had had for many years before, and more than the faculty has to say, even now, in many another institution. This is partly the result of certain faculty members' willingness to spend long hours reading folders and attending meetings of the Admission and Scholarship Committee. It is also in part the result of Dean Bender's meticulous and informative reports, published annually.

Experience here and elsewhere suggests that the teaching

faculty should maintain a lively interest in admission policy, but that, so long as policies it supports are being implemented, it should intervene relatively little in individual admission decisions. Perhaps the most urgent single need is for an informal but regular exchange of queries, data and informal views. The faculty is right when it voices anxiety over this immensely significant area of college administration. It would be wrong if it nurtured dark and undocumented suspicions about what "they" are doing in University Hall. The admissions staff is right when it asks that each professor try to keep in mind all relevant pressures and complications. It would be wrong if it concluded that the majority of the faculty are hostile or uneducable. With these thoughts in mind, the Committee suggests that greater attention should be given to an annual review of changing and emerging problems, a review in which the faculty members of the Admission Committee should make a special effort to participate.

H. *The Size of the College.*

The Committee has viewed the issue of total enrollment as relevant to its concerns in only three, quite specific respects.

First, if there were evidence that Harvard is at present excluding a large number of exceptionally strong applicants primarily because of current limitations upon numbers, this would constitute a powerful argument for expansion. The Committee has found no such evidence. Harvard loses excellent candidates each year, not so frequently because we are unable to admit them as because we are unable to offer them adequate financial aid.

Second, if there were evidence that we are currently admitting substantial numbers of incapable students, the Committee would feel obliged to plead for a planned reduction in the size of the College. Again, there is no evidence to support such a plea. Although we still indulge in a relatively small number of undeniably "weak admits," the Committee believes that there exists at present no reason to exclude them, without the prospect of abler, full-tuition paying replacements. It is worth bearing in mind that *some* students must always fill the bottom quarter of each class.

Third, the faculty has cause to ponder the relationship between the number and quality of our applicants, on the one hand, and, on the other, the special attractions of the type of instruction Harvard offers. Size plays its part in formulating the public image of the College, and thus in the complex equation of recruiting first-rate talent. This would become particularly true if more voices were joined to some already heard saying: "What *can* you do for 5,600 undergraduates [including Radcliffe] which is so special? Why should I try so hard and travel so far?" No doubt Harvard can retain great strength, even with increased size, especially in view of the advantages conferred by the House system. We should not underestimate, however, the intensity with which others watch fluctuations in our quality of instruction, nor the extent to which the size of the student body remains a factor in that estimate.

V. *QUESTIONS OF PREFERENCE AND EMPHASIS*

Within the limits of Harvard's power to attract strong candidates for admission to the College, and allowing for the practical problems involved in the task of selecting from such candidates, we face a series of specific policy choices. Obviously, none of the questions here discussed can be answered fully without reference to numerous others, nor should any of them even be broached except against the background of Harvard's general admission standards and aims, as sketched in Part III, above.

A. *Geographical Distribution.*

Harvard has always been, in some degree, a national, even an international institution. Alongside the sons of New England clergymen and magistrates in the seventeenth-century College could be found an "occasional New Netherlander, Virginian, Bermudian or American Indian." [8] The early record of regional variety was uneven, however, to say the least, as witness the fact that for over fifty years, between 1737 and 1790, not a single New

[8] Morison, *Harvard in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1936), 74.

Yorker attended Harvard![9] The Eliot era brought the first substantial increase in areas represented. The Conant era, with the National Scholarships in the 1930's and the G. I. Bill of Rights in the 1940's, brought a far greater one. What has been happening in recent years, largely because of hard and intelligent work on the part of our admissions staff, is clearly illustrated by the following table:

REGIONS OF RESIDENCE OF ADMITTED-REGISTERED, BY PERCENTAGE OF CLASS

Region	*1929*	*1958*	*1959*	*1960*	*1961*	*1962*	*1963*
New England	60.2	44.0	34.3	36.3	33.9	29.5	29.1
(Mass.)	(55.1)	(35.8)	(26.6)	(28.2)	(26.4)	(22.7)	(21.3)
Middle Atlantic	24.0	27.7	29.0	28.4	30.1	32.8	30.5
Southern	2.5	5.6	6.5	7.2	9.0	6.3	8.1
"Old N.W. Terr."	7.9	12.4	14.4	12.7	12.4	14.6	17.1
Central	1.8	2.9	5.2	4.6	3.7	4.6	3.9
Mountain	.6	1.9	2.8	3.3	2.1	3.1	2.9
Pacific	1.9	2.9	4.3	5.0	4.8	5.9	5.4
Territories	.2	.6	.6	.6	.4	.5	.4
Foreign	.7	2.0	2.7	2.1	3.5	2.6	2.7

Notice that New Englanders, who in the late 1920's still constituted three-fifths of the entering class, now account for well under a third and for the past two years have been outnumbered by the Middle Atlantic delegation. The "Old Northwest Territory" (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota) is solidly ensconced in third place. Over three-fourths of our students come from these three populous areas, i.e., New England, Middle Atlantic, Old Northwest Territory. It is interesting to note that, while the representation of most other regions has remained fairly steady, that of the South seems to be inching up, albeit unevenly.

In general, it is apparent that Harvard's twenty-five year effort to become a national college has produced a high degree of variety in the geographical backgrounds of our students. This does not guarantee comparable variety in economic and social

[9] Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard*, 102.

backgrounds, but the Committee endorses keeping the program as broad as possible, in the interests of optimum selection.

The following figures for the current entering class demonstrate our effort to support geographical distribution through the allocation of scholarship funds:

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS, CLASS OF 1963

Region	*Percentage of Admitted-Registered*	*Percentage of Money Awarded in Scholarships*
New England	29.1	25.6
(Massachusetts)	(21.3)	(19.7)
Middle Atlantic	30.5	19.7
Southern	8.1	8.6
"Old Northwest Territory"	17.1	16.3
Central	3.9	6.6
Mountain	2.9	7.4
Pacific	5.4	8.6
Territories	.4	.4
Foreign	2.7	6.8

There are several characteristics of this comparison deserving of note. (1) Because of the number of local scholarships awarded and the withholding of travel allowances from commuter awards, Massachusetts' (and New England's) share of funds invested in scholarships is at least proportional to the number of students from this area in the entering class; and both, of course, are infinitely larger than the region's share of the national population. (2) We obviously "under-subsidize" the Middle Atlantic region, which is to say, New York in particular. (3) Of the other regions, the Central, Mountain and Pacific, as well as foreign countries, are receiving the strongest financial support relative to the size of their representation. In presenting the above statistics, the Committee sees no reason to criticize the combination of judgments which they reflect.

Recommendation 11.

The effort to maintain the national quality of the student body deserves continued support, not because it automatically guarantees other than geographical variety among entering

students, but because it helps to maintain the size and heterogeneity of Harvard's pool of applicants.

B. *School Backgrounds.*

The Committee believes that several different sets of figures must be considered before there can be any informed discussion of public and private school graduates in the College. At the same time, there is probably no other topic in this report which lends itself so readily to quick, misguided reactions if the statistics are not interpreted with care and common sense.

First, and most obviously, what about the sizes of the two categories? Here is the pattern revealed by successive annual reports of the Dean of Admissions:

SCHOOL BACKGROUNDS OF ADMITTED-REGISTERED, BY PERCENTAGE OF CLASS

Type of School	*1956*	*1957*	*1958*	*1959*	*1960*	*1961*	*1962*	*1963*
Public	47.9	53.3	53.9	52.6	51.5	50.1	53.9	55.2
Private	52.1	46.7	46.1	47.4	48.5	49.9	46.1	44.8

Dean Bender states in his *Report for 1957–58* (page 21) that the shift in proportions reflects "only the distribution of quantity and quality of our candidates [between] the two types of schools, not any prejudice for or against either." He goes on to point out that in the six years between 1952 and 1958, the number of private school applicants increased by 83 and public school candidates by 858. As that figure indicates, a higher proportion of private than of public school graduates who apply are admitted, the percentages for 1959 (Class of 1963) being 47.4% of 1,386 private school applicants and 34.1% of 2,769 public school applicants.

The question remains: how well do the two groups do at Harvard? This involves the further question, whether it is fair or useful to talk at all about two mutually exclusive groups, when they are actually so varied within themselves. Setting that issue aside for the moment, however, the Committee presents the following statistics. The Classes of 1957 and 1958, which averaged about 53.6% public and 46.4% private school graduates, con-

tained 60 students who graduated from Harvard College *summa cum laude*. Of these, 47 came from public schools. The recipients of high honors (*summas* and *magnas*) totaled 344 in those two classes. Of that number 224 were public and 120 private school graduates. Turning from this top 15% of the two classes to the bottom 10%, we find that a total of 230 students either had their connection with the College severed for academic reasons (though many have subsequently returned for a second try) or dropped out while in unsatisfactory standing. Of this group of 230 "flunk outs," 130 were from private and only 100 from public schools.

A report from the Dean of Freshmen suggests a continuing pattern. Of the 41 members of the Class of 1962 who last year either were fired for academic reasons or withdrew while in unsatisfactory standing, only 15 were public high school graduates, as against 26 from private schools, though the percentages for the class as a whole were 53.9 public and 46.1 private.

Feeling that exaggerated emphasis on the top and bottom extremes of College performance could easily give a distorted impression, the Committee sought a more general comparison, by quartiles, for the Class of 1962, including both predicted placement (PRL) before entrance and actual performance as freshmen last year:

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOL GRADUATES—
CLASS OF 1962

	PRL		*Freshman Grade Average*	
	Public	*Private*	*Public*	*Private*
Top ¼	34%	12%	30%	18%
2nd ¼	32%	20%	26%	25%
3rd ¼	21%	29%	25%	27%
4th ¼	13%	39%	19%	30%

In at least one respect, these figures serve to temper the startling impression created by those for high honors and flunk outs, since they reveal that rather fewer public school graduates and more private school products turned up in the top one-half of last year's freshman class than might have been expected on the basis of their PRL's. The comfort thus accorded private school enthu-

siasts, however, is distinctly limited. Given the fact that the PRL is computed as a four-year projection, not as a specific indicator of freshman performance, and given the tendency of many public school boys to improve their records in subsequent years, relative to the often better trained private school graduates, the prediction that more than two-thirds of the top half of the Class of 1962 will prove to be public school products may ultimately prove accurate.

The Committee cannot escape, nor does it wish to avoid, the conclusion that Harvard should continue to admit an increasing proportion of its freshmen from among qualified graduates of public schools. To ignore or seek to minimize the pool of talent which such applicants represent would be to fly in the face of all our current performance studies. The Committee also feels, however, that in pursuing this policy, the College should not lose sight of several considerations which no statistics can ever illustrate.

One such consideration has to do with the very fine performance of many students from private schools. The latter will probably always produce a substantial number of boys who are not oriented toward academic or professional training, and so are not interested in striving for degrees with honors, but who none the less contribute a great deal to the intellectual atmosphere of Harvard. Most members of the faculty have known such boys, and been glad that they have. Another point to be made is that, while no one can say with confidence how much better an education gifted students obtain by living in an undergraduate population representing a wide variety of school backgrounds, we are committed to the idea that diversified individuals learn from one another, as well as from the formal offerings of the College. Still a third *caveat* should be directed against angry assumptions that Harvard turns away highly talented high school graduates in order to admit favored applicants from private schools — the cut-off line in this respect is fixed not by school background but by the limit of our financial resources. As noted earlier, our most serious losses are in the group admitted, but unable to register because of lack of scholarship funds. Finally,

the independent scholarship programs of many excellent private schools have brought to them, and to Harvard in its turn, a much greater variety of young Americans than traditional stereotypes concerning private schooling might suggest.

The Committee endorses Dean Bender's stated avoidance of prejudice for or against any school, or category of schools. Such categories, endowed with a false concreteness, might well distract us from the business at hand, which remains that of selecting applicants on their own merits, insofar as we can assess them. Any preconceived quota, of any kind, would surely interfere with such selection, to the detriment of final quality.

C. *Social and Economic Backgrounds.*

Less can be said on the issue of socio-economic variety in the College than on many others treated in this report. The philosophy of admissions just cited with respect to school backgrounds must preclude, without qualification, any discrimination against a boy on the basis of his ethnic background, his religion or his family's station in life. In this, as in many other connections, Harvard has acted on the assumption that variety of human material, if it can be obtained without the sacrifice of intellectual standards, is preferable to homogeneity. The College has the further, less selfish, responsibility of keeping up the search for high abilities, everywhere in the American population.

Thomas Jefferson would have talked of an "aristocracy of talents" and Vilfredo Pareto, of the need for social mobility to nurture and reinforce an "intellectual elite." Yielding to the popular distaste for terms such as "aristocracy" and "elite," we can just as well state our ideal as one of seeking to break through all barriers which separate gifted boys from the chance to capitalize on their gifts.

In striving to implement that ideal, the College in the academic year 1958–59 granted outright to students, in scholarships and beneficiary aid, close to $1,250,000. The large number of General Motors and National Merit Scholarship winners who chose Harvard (317 such winners were in residence last year) brought the total of additional funds paid to our students in 1958–59 by these

two major outside sources to approximately $250,000. As for the entering Class of 1963, 27.2% are receiving Harvard scholarships, and we await final totals on outside aid. This massive investment helps to maintain not only wide geographical variety but also a far greater range of social backgrounds than could possibly exist at Harvard without the scholarship program. It should be added that in 1958–59 the College also loaned $400,000 to students (as compared to less than $100,000 as recently as 1952–53).

The Committee, in reaffirming the value of such heterogeneity and endorsing the use of gift money to ensure its continuance, nevertheless advances two sobering reminders. One is that we are still able to bring to Cambridge only a few students from low income groups, and almost none from the lowest. In 1948–49, the average scholarship stipend in the College was $509, while in 1958–59, it was $1,130; but over the same decade, though scholarships have kept up with Harvard's tuition increases, they have not begun to keep up with increases in the estimated annual expenses of a resident student: from $1,500 in 1948–49 to $2,750 last year. It is not surprising that the median family income of stipendary scholarship holders in the Class of 1963 is $7,700, as compared with $4,800 only seven years ago. The faculty should not, under present conditions, expect too much socio-economic variety in the College. The long-established predominance of business and professional family backgrounds remains essentially unaltered.

The other word of caution applies to the care with which "maximum need" scholarships must be granted. When students who have been awarded such aid do well at Harvard, they are rightly greeted as exciting triumphs of successful talent hunting. When they fail, they represent disheartening examples of personal defeat and wasted resources. Experienced officials of scholarship granting agencies such as the Pullman Foundation constantly reiterate the truth that it is easily possible to ask a talented boy to jump further, in terms of educational demands and cultural surroundings, than his background will permit. This should be recognized frankly, and stated without a trace of patronizing

condescension. The Committee does not believe it can urge a more restrictive policy with respect to high-need scholarships. It submits that some mistakes will always occur in this difficult field — mistakes justified by the often brilliant results of successful gambles. Both realism and humanity, however, demand that we continue to proceed, as the Harvard admission staff has been proceeding, with serious concern for the individual applicant's well-being.

D. *Greater Boston Applicants.*

With respect to the admission of this category of candidates, the Committee has been faced with a complex and disturbing set of problems. A study made by Mr. Delmar Leighton, since becoming Master of Dudley House (mainly for non-residents), shows that between the five classes of 1953–57 and the four classes of 1958–61 the average annual number of applications for admission to the College rose by almost exactly 30%; yet the average number of applicants from sixteen local high schools classified as major "feeders" fell off by about 6%, from 276 to 258. The decline in local applications, striking enough in absolute terms, is far more so in relative ones.

Two probable questions may be anticipated by statistical evidence. First, how much preference is shown residents of Greater Boston who apply for admission? According to Mr. Leighton's investigation, an average of 66.4% of all applicants from the local schools specified above were admitted each year from 1949 through 1953, as compared with 60.6% of the College's total applicant group. From 1954 through 1957 (the last year for which such figures have yet been assembled), the average rate of admission to the College dropped to 46.3%, while the comparable figure for the sample of local applicants fell to 49.1%. It would thus appear that, at least as compared with the situation of only a few years ago, Bostonians currently enjoy no marked advantage in the competition for admission to Harvard.

There remains a second natural question, what kind of academic records have local students been making in the College? Performance figures for the nine years surveyed by Mr.

Leighton show that while his large sample of students did slightly less well than the student body as a whole — 35.4% on the Dean's List to the all-College average of 39.9%, and 9.5% unsatisfactory as against 8.8% of the total undergraduate student body — the differences are not highly significant. (Not all the local high school graduates in this sample were commuters, in the sense of living at home while in Harvard College; but they were initially selected from the Greater Boston admission dockets.) Local boys, as a group, do not appear to represent an unsound educational investment on Harvard's part, though the Committee has had to take note of some very poor performances by individual holders of commuter scholarships.

The fact remains that we are well on the way to losing touch with our own community. Each year fewer Harvard graduates are being fed back into the businesses, the professions and the politics of the state in general and the Boston area in particular. Whereas Massachusetts residents constituted 55.1% of the Harvard Class of 1929, they come to only 21.3% in that of 1963. This is a development which no university, public or private, can afford to view with equanimity. It is especially disheartening in our case; for it is not too much to say that Harvard owes much of its distinctive quality and prestige to a relationship with Boston which is unmatched, as between any other American private university and "its" city.

There appear to be several causes behind the present situation. One is dislike on the part of many urban, and even more suburban, families for the conditions of student commuting, and their consequent decision to send their sons to residential colleges elsewhere. Another is the fairly solid resistance in many of Boston's best parochial high schools to supporting applications to Harvard. Still a third is the widespread impression in this area that the national appeal of the College has made competition, both for admission and for survival once admitted, too intense for most local high school products.

There are two extreme positions which may be adopted with respect to the problem of local applicants. The first is to say that Greater Bostonians are right to be wary of present-day

Harvard and its demands, that in becoming "national" the College has necessarily become less "local," and that undue concern for maintaining close touch with the Boston area will only damage the general standards of admission. The contrary position is to insist that we simply cannot afford to cut ourselves off from the local community, that our present rate of decline in the representation of this region would, if unchecked, result in only negligible representation within the foreseeable future, and that we must, in striving to show greater hospitality to local applicants accept the need to use a special, and avowedly easier, set of standards for the admission of students who seek "our $1,600, as opposed to our $2,750, package" (Mr. Leighton's phrase).

Without claiming to have found an easy answer to this dilemma, the Committee suggests that it is possible to separate the appeal for greater hospitality from that for markedly relaxed admission standards. We can doubtless afford to go on doing as we now do, which is to take somewhat longer chances on the ability of numerous local boys to make the grade at Harvard than we can justify taking in the case of applicants from a great distance, since the latter face heavier expenses and perhaps more complex adjustments by virtue of geographical displacement alone. It would, however, scarcely solve the local problem to admit a really weak group of Greater Boston youngsters, many of them to flunk out of the College and the rest to constitute a painful stratum of second-class citizens. Furthermore, if one considers instructional facilities, as opposed to bed space, it becomes clear that a commuter admitted with a PRL of 4.8 does in a sense, though not on the basis of direct, one-to-one competition, force us to reject a boy from farther away, perhaps with a PRL of 3.8.

On the other hand, the Committee is convinced that Harvard has had greater success in attracting top-notch applicants from elsewhere in America than in letting its own neighbors know what it is looking for and what it has to offer. This is not because of lack of interest on the part of the admission staff, but our program for the future should include a much increased effort to re-educate Greater Boston as to our general admission standards

and our determination to see that local applicants who are admitted have a fine educational experience in the College.

Recommendation 12.

A continuing effort should be made to attract qualified applicants from Boston and its suburbs, but there should be no relaxation of standards in favor of such applicants.

E. *Transfer Students.*

In recent years, Harvard College has been receiving annually between 150 and 200 applications from students already enrolled in other, predominantly four-year, colleges. In 1956, 30 were admitted; in 1957, 20; in 1958, again 20; and in 1959 the figure was 20 once again. No transfer is admitted into senior standing. Very few come as freshmen. The groups who register as sophomores and juniors, respectively, are approximately equal in size. No transfer is eligible for scholarship aid in his first term at Harvard. Even so, the total of 90 transfers admitted over the past four years is higher than the equivalent figure in any of a number of other large private colleges. It is, of course, infinitesimal in comparison with the number of transfers to any good state university. The immediate question, however, is not how well we think we handle this category of applicants, in relation to the records of other institutions, but rather what weight we think transfers should be assigned in Harvard's own particular complex of admissions.

Several difficulties must be noted at once. For one thing, many of the transfer applicants appear to be seeking admission to Harvard for no better reason than that they are dissatisfied with their present college choices, on social or emotional rather than academic grounds. For another thing, tact alone forbids our actively recruiting transfers from other four-year colleges. Finally, many admitted transfers prove hard to place correctly in Harvard course sequences, while our increased emphasis on honors tutorial poses problems for even the ablest student entering late.

Nevertheless, the Committee has been impressed by the performance of recent transfer students, as a group. Of 61 such

students in the Classes of 1957 through 1959, 53 graduated on schedule and 3 others may still earn their degrees, 32 received honors (including 12 *summas* or *magnas*), and only 5 flunked out (2) or dropped out (3). There appears to be ample evidence that we have been getting, by transfer, students of high quality, students who have known why they wanted Harvard and who, before coming here, had already cleared most of the hurdles which account for ordinary undergraduate attrition.

The Committee is equally impressed by the importance, for American higher education generally, of keeping open the possibility of movement as between various colleges. We have no way of securing adequate figures on students who have left Harvard to attend other institutions, but in most cases the change has seemed to be a wise one. Conversely, we assume that some highly qualified students enter other colleges and then, because of increased self-confidence or new intellectual goals, decide that they would like to complete their degrees at Harvard. It should perhaps be added that the number of junior colleges now operating two-year programs suggests interesting possibilities, free of the traditional diplomatic obstacles to inviting transfers.

Recommendation 13.

The present policy of not granting scholarship aid to any transfer student during his first year in the College should be abandoned. In general, Harvard can well afford to appear more hospitable toward transfer applicants than it has in the past.

F. *Advanced Standing.*

The area of advanced placement testing (and resultant admission decisions) is one in which Harvard has taken a leading role during the past five years, with gratifying effects on our relations with a variety of excellent secondary schools. It is also an area in which certain policy decisions, if made, might well revolutionize the future character of the College's entering classes.

Admission to freshmen standing after three years of secondary school, and without diploma, appears to be the least impressive

feature of the program. Out of 35 applicants for this type of admission in the Class of 1962, 11 were accepted. The corresponding figures for the Class of 1963 show that 54 applied and 13 were admitted. Unless there are very clear instructions to the contrary, the Committee on Admissions, faced with the present crush of normal applications, understandably tends to be cautious about "early admit" candidates. Furthermore, while all the resources and all the pride of secondary school teachers and officials are mobilized on the side of *advanced placement* in college, after normal admission, those same factors make for the retention of many boys who might apply for *early admission* to Harvard but are instead urged by their own school advisers to stay another year and then, perhaps, try for advanced standing. In other words, both parties to the transfer — the school and the college — are inclined to favor holding even very gifted students back for the full term of pre-college training. There may on occasion be some waste involved in that solution, but there can be even greater waste in hurrying a boy into Harvard before he is mature enough to handle its requirements.

It is admission to sophomore standing which has thus, not surprisingly, become the most dramatic form of advanced placement. An entering student, after having been admitted in the normal fashion, is awarded sophomore standing at the outset if he has received grades of 3, 4 or 5 (5 being the highest possible) on three different advanced placement examinations, given by the College Board the preceding May. Note that applicants are not, at present, *admitted* on the basis of these special tests. Even so, the following statistics are arresting:

NUMBER OF ENTERING STUDENTS AWARDED SOPHOMORE STANDING

Year Admitted	*American*	*Foreign Credentials*
1955	2	11
1956	13	12
1957	33	21
1958	55	14
1959	84	11

Some indication of the present scale of the pressure, and the opportunity, involved is that in the spring of 1958 the College Board administered about 3,000 advanced placement examinations. Last year it administered over 8,000.

It is possible that we have now reached, or are approaching, a plateau, with Harvard already getting a look at about as many advanced placement applicants as the secondary schools which offer the requisite special preparatory courses are likely to produce. It is also possible, however, that we stand on the threshold of a new development, an unprecedented expansion in such courses, especially if they are instituted on a large scale by public high schools in the Middle and Far West.

The Committee feels that this promising, potentially explosive and rapidly changing set of conditions deserves serious and continuing study by the College. With respect to advanced standing and advanced placement, it would be folly to propose that we assume any fixed posture while the evidence keeps pouring in. Already, however, certain lines of policy are beginning to suggest themselves. One such, the need for caution in granting early admission, has already been discussed. A second, also cautious, is a warning against the too lavish granting of sophomore standing to boys who might do better at Harvard if they went through the freshman year, with its special advising and its opportunities to shop among alternative fields of concentration. A third is the suggestion that the advanced standing program *may* confront Harvard's faith in variety of student backgrounds and aspirations with a new, subtle, but none the less powerful type of (especially pre-professional) conformity. A fourth, more positive, is the hazardous prediction that advanced *placement* in a single field, as distinct from advanced *standing* in terms of "sophomore admission," may yet prove to be the most valuable feature of the whole program. To run a boy through Harvard in three years or to admit him after only three years of secondary schooling may or may not, in any given case, be a good thing. To admit him as a regular freshman, but then to let him move as fast as he can in a field for which he has already demonstrated precocious gifts, is

surely consistent with the best traditions of flexibility in capitalizing on talents.

In dealing with advanced placement, Harvard is feeling its way across uncharted terrain, under conditions of severely limited visibility. For whatever consolation it may offer, the fact that numerous other colleges, in some cases after early reluctance, are beginning to grope along behind us or by our side suggests an increasingly general conviction that at least we are not heading toward a precipice.

Recommendation 14.

Admission with sophomore standing and freshman admission with advanced placement in one or two fields are both deserving of continued use, and possible expansion. Such expansion, however, is one of the issues which most clearly demands continuous reappraisal by the Admission Committee and the Committee on Advanced Standing.

G. *Foreign Students.*

Although included, for statistical purposes, in the survey of geographical distribution, Part V, Section A (page 30), foreign nationals admitted to Harvard College constitute a group worth special consideration. The numbers involved are not large, averaging only 30 to 40 in any one of the last few years (note that this figure refers only to undergraduates), but their presence in the community adds a tone which Harvard has cause to cherish.

There are inevitably some difficult problems connected with the selection, placement and subsequent counseling of foreign students. These problems, however, appear to have been solved quite well through full use, before admission, of such screening devices as are currently available, including in most instances the College Board examinations, and special attention thereafter from the Adviser to Foreign Students. Our selectivity is extremely high in this area. The Class of 1963 contains only 24 "real foreign students" (excluding 5 Canadians and graduates of American schools abroad), out of 124 applicants for admission.

Two issues still call for consideration. One is financial; the other, linguistic. In order to attract foreign students of high quality, it has been, and will doubtless continue to be, necessary to grant substantial scholarships. Hence, despite their limited numbers (under 3% of the College population), such students last year received 6.8% of our available scholarship funds. Equally important, such scholarships must be granted on the assumption that they will be continued even under circumstances which might call for reduction or discontinuance if held by American students. Last but not least, it is the counsel both of humanity and of educational wisdom to see that the scholarship budget of a foreign student provides for at least two trips home during his undergraduate years at Harvard.

The second problem, that of obtaining adequate assurance of ability to control the English language, takes on some of its acuteness by virtue of the financial investment which a foreign admission often involves. With regard to linguistic preparation, experience has shown that no other single qualification for success in the College is quite so difficult to ascertain, merely on the basis of formal, written credentials. Considering the large number of foreign students elsewhere in the University (they constitute almost one-half the enrollment in the Graduate School of Public Health, for example, and one-fourth in the Graduate School of Public Administration) Harvard might well establish a system of precautionary interviewing abroad, a system which would easily pay for itself if it prevented even a few mistaken decisions to admit and grant financial aid. If such a program is in fact set up for the whole University, the College ought definitely to be included in its operation.

The records of the 113 foreign students in the Classes of 1957, 1958 and 1959 reflect good academic performance. 89 graduated on schedule, and another 9 may yet do so. 40 received honors, including 8 *summas* and *magnas*. Only 15 flunked out (7) or dropped out (8). In the light of such evidence, the Committee feels justified in supporting the admission of foreign nationals, in approximately the present numbers, on essentially the present

financial terms, and with the basis of selection reinforced only by stronger precautions against language deficiencies.

Recommendation 15.

Harvard should provide for the preliminary screening of foreign applicants by interview, particularly with respect to their mastery of English; and the College should be included in whatever such program may be instituted by the University as a whole, either alone or in concert with other institutions.

H. *Harvard Sons.*

In turning to applicants who are sons of Harvard College alumni, we enter a torrid zone. As it has done in approaching all other questions of admission policy, the Committee urges, first of all, a look at what has been happening in this area. It may be of historical interest to note that until the beginning of World War II, Harvard sons regularly constituted one-quarter or more of each entering class. With the Class of 1945, the figure dropped to just over 21%, where it remained until another sharp drop for the Class of 1948, all the way to 15.5%. Only two years later, the huge Class of 1950 contained 350 Harvard sons (21.2% of the admitted-registered); but the "normal" figure hovered between 16% to 18% from the end of the War until 1957, when the Class of 1961 showed a new increase:

HARVARD SONS *

Class	*Applicants*	*Admitted*	*Registered*	*Percentage of Class*	*Not Registered*	*Rejected*
1955	250	234	183	16.5	51	16
1956	282	246	208	17.1	38	36
1957	290	244	206	17.8	38	55
1958	293	225	192	16.5	33	58
1959	302	223	197	17.7	26	79
1960	323	214	192	17.7	22	109
1961	358	249	219	19.4	30	109
1962	379	260	231	20.0	29	119
1963	381	238	214	17.6	24	143

* In Harvard practice, this term refers to sons of former students in the College, whether graduates or not. Sons of graduate degree holders receive no special consideration and are not included in "Harvard son" statistics.

The above statistics may call forth some immediate charges of excessive favoritism; but before these can even be discussed, several other substantive points must be made. The 214 Harvard sons in the Class of 1963 should be compared with the 280 in that of 1939, 350 in that of 1950 and 220 as recently as that of 1953. Furthermore, due note should be taken of the mounting number of those *not* admitted since 1951 (Class of 1955). The number rejected has climbed from 16 to 143 in just 8 years. This almost uninterrupted decline in the percentage of Harvard son applicants who have been offered admission to the College emerges clearly from the following summary:

PERCENTAGE OF APPLICANTS ADMITTED

Class	*Entire Applicant Group*	*Harvard Sons*
1955	66.2	93.6
1956	62.8	87.2
1957	53.9	79.5
1958	56.4	76.8
1959	48.0	73.8
1960	43.2	66.3
1961	46.3	69.6
1962	38.9	68.6
1963	38.4	62.5

These figures reveal, among other things, that the trend toward greater selectivity in the admitting of Harvard sons has been virtually uninterrupted. Nevertheless, that trend has only barely kept up, in terms of absolute reduction in percentages admitted since 1951, with the increased selectivity applied to the class as a whole.

There can be no denying that the faculty has the right to ask what considerations operate in favor of the admission of Harvard sons. The members of the Committee have shared the doubts of many of our colleagues with respect to a policy which authorizes such preferential treatment. We have, in addition, had to ponder the following distribution of Harvard sons by quartiles of last year's entering class:

HARVARD SONS — CLASS OF 1962

	PRL	*Freshman Grades*
Top ¼ of Class	12%	14%
2nd " " "	20%	20%
3rd " " "	30%	27%
4th " " "	38%	39%

We have read with concern the Dean of Freshmen's report that more than one-third of the Class of 1962's academic failures last year (14 out of 41 flunk outs and unsatisfactory drop outs) were Harvard sons. Finally, as individual teachers, many of us have had experience with those unfortunate undergraduates who are in the College almost entirely because of parental insistence, do not want to be here and generally find ways to get out.

Looking ahead, one encounters still another disturbing problem: the predictable increase in the annual number of Harvard son applications. This figure, which stood at 250 for the Class of 1955, was already 381 for the Class of 1963. We are only now moving into the years of heaviest application on the part of sons of Harvard graduates from the period after 1945, a period of enlarged classes, composed of men who have since, on the average, had more children than did their predecessors of the 1930's. As a result of this probable dual-factor increase, instead of last spring's 381 applications by Harvard sons, we may shortly, perhaps within five years, be considering 500 or even 600 per year. If that happens, the College will face a hard choice among three alternatives: (1) maintaining about the present percentage of acceptance of Harvard son applicants and rejecting a correspondingly larger number of other applicants; (2) maintaining about the present percentages of Harvard son applicants *and* other applicants, while increasing the size of the student body; or (3) maintaining about the present *number* of Harvard sons admitted, thus progressively increasing the number of such applicants rejected.

Having stated frankly the nature and dimensions of the problem, the Committee believes that both fairness and sound judgment demand a hearing for certain less negative points with

regard to the admission of Harvard sons. Perhaps most obvious to anyone who approaches this matter at all thoughtfully is the fact that many of these boys have enjoyed advantages of school training and parental interest in college education which would keep their rate of acceptance by Harvard relatively high under all circumstances. It would be premature, to say the least, to interpret the figures on pages 46 and 47 as reflecting nothing but conscious favoritism by the Admission Committee, applied without reference to other credentials.

Another point not to be lost sight of is that at least a third of these students do make the upper half of their class in their freshman year, and between an eighth and a sixth of them reach the top quartile. Sweeping or all-inclusive statements about Harvard sons which impose a sense of inferiority or guilty privilege on a boy who is going about his business in the College are clearly objectionable. When they impose such a sense on a boy in the top levels of a present-day Harvard class, they become ridiculous as well.

Finally, though the Committee recommends further tightening in the admission of Harvard sons, it does so with the warning that some degree, probably a quite substantial degree, of family continuity is vital to any college. In a very real sense, Harvard lives and prospers through a combination of interlocking efforts, including those of countless devoted alumni. Recruiting by the Schools and Scholarships Committees of our regional Harvard Clubs, for example, has become an integral part — we should now say an indispensable part — of the College's entire admission program. To take another example, we regularly appeal to our alumni for financial support on the ground that they are not just former students, but members of the Harvard community throughout their lives. There is, in short, an obligation to respect the motives which lead alumni to press for the admission of their sons — sometimes, but only sometimes, in the face of clear indications that the boys in question will probably neither do very well nor be very happy in the College. The fact that several major institutions of higher learning are at present actively seeking to attract a *larger* share of their former students' children is a timely

reminder that there can be such a thing as *too little* alumni pressure on admissions. Even at its most uncomfortable, such pressure at least bespeaks the pride of most Harvard graduates in the College which helped educate them and which they would like to see helping to educate their sons.

Recommendation 16.

The applications of "Harvard sons" should be scrutinized with increasing rigor. Parentage should not be a basis for the preferential acceptance of weak candidates. The efforts of the present Dean of Admissions to explain this developing policy to Harvard alumni, in clear but sympathetic terms, merit commendation and continuation.

I. *Faculty Sons.*

It would ill behoove the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to debate issues of preferential admission unless it were willing to consider all available evidence concerning the admission of sons of teachers and educational administrators, definitely including those holding Harvard appointments. Admitted applicants whose fathers are listed as "university professors or administrators," *here or elsewhere*, have constituted an appreciable, though not a major, fraction of recent entering classes: 5.2% (56 in number) of the Class of 1960; 5.5% (62) of the Class of 1961; 6.8% (78) of the Class of 1962; and 7.7% (93) of this year's Class of 1963. As regards preference in admission decisions, the Class of 1963 appears to be typical of current tendencies. Whereas the overall percentage of applicants admitted was 38.4%, college officers' sons as a special category were admitted at a rate of 58.2%, not far below the "Harvard sons" at 62.5%.

Of more immediate relevance, of course, is the record with respect to "Harvard faculty sons." The numbers have been too small to warrant any separate study of action on applications, year by year. Given the unconcealed policy of according every consideration to such applications, however, it appears certain that they have enjoyed an acceptance rate even higher than that of Harvard sons. One argument which might be advanced in justification of this preference is that a Harvard faculty son almost never receives a stipendiary scholarship (because of

parental income, *not* because of any flat rule to the contrary). Hence, his relative ease in securing admission represents a form of return for the extent to which faculty funds (and faculty salaries) support the scholarship program for other students. A much better argument, if true, would be, that no dangerous preference is indicated by the academic performance of such applicants, once admitted.

In the four Classes of 1959 through 1962, there were admitted only 11 sons of members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Of these, 3 had PRL's of 4.0 or lower, and the lowest was 4.3. To date, none has had a grade average below straight C, and 7 of the 11 have Dean's List averages of B or higher. Of the 4 Arts and Sciences faculty sons in last year's graduating class, 3 received their A.B. degrees *magna cum laude.*

Sons of members of other Harvard faculties numbered 46 in the four Classes under review (1959 through 1962), but 31 of these were sons of Medical School professors, some of whom are difficult to classify with respect to their faculty affiliations and their private practices. It is unfortunately necessary to point out that of these 46 students, no fewer than 26 (15 of the Medical School sons) have had grade averages in the lowest quartile of their respective classes. This is a much worse record than that of Harvard graduates' sons in the same classes. Though the numbers involved make difficult any real statistical analysis of admission decisions, the Committee feels constrained to point out that 21 of 31 sons of Medical School faculty had bottom-quartile PRL's when admitted, while 10 of 15 sons of members of other faculties (exclusive of Arts and Sciences) were at the same level of predicted performance.

The Committee underscores the relatively strong performance of the few sons of members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in the four classes analyzed. However, preference accorded to faculty sons in general, taking account of all holders of Corporation appointments, would appear to call for re-examination.

Recommendation 17.

A careful re-evaluation is called for with respect to applications by sons of Harvard faculty members. Special preference

for the children of holders of Corporation appointments could easily invalidate every other position adopted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

J. *Athletes.*

It can, and probably will, be argued that whatever attention is paid to athletic abilities, in deciding upon Harvard admissions, represents a lapse from "intellectual standards." The Committee, however, remains convinced that intellect is not a fragile plant which needs protection from all other concerns, but something strong enough to hold its own in the midst of varied activities and momentary diversions — and to emerge predominant. Harvard has long resisted sporadic pressures in favor of letting sports publicity influence academic policy. Few other colleges have enjoyed such understanding support from alumni in insisting that educational values come first. At the same time, Harvard prides itself on a program of intramural sports so extensive as to make athletics easily accessible to any boy in the College who wants to participate. At the intercollegiate level, Harvard is fortunate in belonging to the Ivy League, where it competes with seven other colleges having comparable admission, scholarship and eligibility standards.

Only a minority of the faculty would disagree, we believe, with the assertion that Harvard can win some football games without threatening the prime respect it guarantees to achievements of the mind. It is sometimes amusing to hear an athletic success, on the Thames at Henley or in the Yale Bowl, referred to in apologetic terms which the Greeks, at their most rigorously intellectual, would have found incomprehensible.

The immediate question, of course, is whether or not athletic aims distract us from our proper purposes — whether or not evidence of athletic ability in individuals seeking admission is given undeserved weight in the selection process. Countless studies have demonstrated a negative correlation between outstanding athletic ability and superior academic performance in any large group of subjects. Obviously, this does not mean that every intellectually gifted boy must be incompetent in sports, nor that every applicant with extra muscle and fast lateral movement must

be a low achiever in his classes. It does, however, help to explain why the search for scholar-athletes is so demanding as to be essentially a luxury for an admission staff already charged with looking for many other things at the same time. Under the circumstances, many readers may be surprised at the following distribution by quartiles of 79 students in the Class of 1962 who were rated "1" in athletic promise, i.e., varsity prospects in various sports:

PREDICTED VARSITY ATHLETES — CLASS OF 1962

	PRL	*Freshman Grades*
Top ¼ of Class	12%	10%
2nd " " "	14%	26%
3rd " " "	28%	35%
4th " " "	46%	28%

Note that only about one-fourth of these "1" athletes are expected to be in the top half of the class during their four years in the College, and well over one-third of them attained that level in their first year. To find only 28% in the lowest quarter suggests that we are by no means loading the bottom of our entering classes with applicants who offer little beyond athletic promise. It is true that these figures refer to all "1" athletes combined, and that varsity prospects in the heavy contact sports are often less distinguished students than are many tennis or squash players, for example. It is also true, however, that our winning football and soccer teams of 1959 are "brighter," in terms of academic performance, than were their notably less successful predecessors of a few years ago. One final, unevaluated note: the only "1" athlete among the 41 academic failures in last year's freshman class was an oarsman with a Dean's List PRL.

The Committee is unanimous in urging that no special preference be given applicants on the basis of athletic ability, as opposed to any of the other respects — artistic, musical or dramatic, for example — in which a boy may have demonstrated first-rate promise. Certainly, no applicant should be brought to Harvard as an athlete in the face of clearly indicated weaknesses which would prevent his making his way as a student in the College. On the other hand, the majority of the Committee members

agree with the policy followed at present by the Admission Committee, i.e., giving just as much attention to the athletic rating as to any other indicator of extra-curricular excellence, *once the question of intellectual competence has been squarely faced.*

Recommendation 18.

Athletic ability should not be treated as, in itself, justifying admission. It does, however, deserve to be noted as a significant extra-curricular talent.

K. *Intended Fields of Concentration.*

The Committee does not feel called upon to go into great detail on the subject of an applicant's declaration of future field of concentration, as a factor in the decision to admit or reject him. However, enough has been said in the faculty about this issue to indicate that a few remarks about it may properly conclude the present segment of the report.

An enlightening study of the Class of 1959, published last September by the Harvard Office of Student Placement, has occasioned widespread interest in the difference between intended and final areas of concentration. One section of the document summarizes such changes in simple tabular form:

AREAS OF CONCENTRATION — CLASS OF 1959

	Declared Intentions at Entrance	*Final June, 1959*
Natural Sciences and Engineering	50%	28%
Humanities	31%	29%
Social Sciences	19%	43%

The swing from the natural to the social sciences is often explained in excessively negative terms. Many students who make that change are "pre-meds" who discover that they can satisfy the medical school requirements without having to complete an undergraduate concentration in the physical or biological sciences. Many more are students who, as entering freshmen, knew little about their own aptitudes except that they included some skill in mathematics, but who early discovered that a scientific career demands much more than that. Finally, a large proportion of our

freshmen have little conception of what the humanities and social sciences represent at the college level. Scalded, or at least bored, by required secondary school courses in English, history and civics, they are unlikely to cite anything relating to those subjects as their prospective areas of concentration. What happens subsequently is often the result of attraction to social or humanistic studies, rather than mere revulsion against the sciences.

In the light of available evidence, the Committee sees neither a feasible method nor a demonstrable need to admit future classes to the College under any system of field quotas. The announced intentions of applicants are too undependable, too subject to change during four years of college, to permit any wise use of such intentions as criteria for admission. Nevertheless, the Committee believes that the whole problem of changes in fields of concentration deserves full and thoughtful investigation, because of its relevance to our undergraduate instruction.

Recommendation 19.

No applicant for admission should be either accepted or rejected on the basis of his indicated field of concentration. Shifts in fields are to be expected after entrance. However, though such shifts — especially from the natural sciences to the social sciences and the humanities — are due to many factors outside the scope of the present Committee's inquiry, they should be made the subject of further study by the College.

VI. *FACING THE INDIVIDUAL DECISION*

The governing aims and standards of Harvard, as outlined in Part III, provide the framework within which our admissions are administered. The practical problems discussed in Part IV set limits and pose challenges to that administration. The series of questions just raised in Part V constitute more or less specific pressures bearing on the entire task of selection. When all is said and done, however, aims and standards, limitations and pressures come together in the evaluation of the particular case, in the individual decision about each of some five thousand completed applications.

No one who has ever participated in the April meetings of the Admission Committee could fail to appreciate the difficulty of keeping in balance, or even in mind, all the particular arguments which can be brought to bear on the acceptance or rejection of any boy, be he from New York City, Roxbury or a Dakota farming town, from Phillips Exeter or Blue Earth High School. It was such appreciation which led the Committee to begin its report with a tribute to the way in which this exacting and exhausting assignment has been carried out during years of implacable growth in its scope and complexity.

A substantial fraction of each year's applicants are clearly admissible, on the strength of school records, test scores and personal evaluations. Such "clear admits," allowance made for those who eventually decline admission to Harvard (about one in five of today's admitted group), may fill two-thirds of the places in a current entering class. Another major fraction must be rejected out of hand, as patently unequal to the demands of the College. It is the remaining pool of *possible* talent, the 1,500 to 2,000 boys of whom only some 500 can finally be offered admission (and fewer still, scholarships), that presents the greatest challenge to judgment and intuition. Having reaffirmed its intellectual standards, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences should pledge its support to the fullest exercise of such judgment and — since the alternative seems mediocrity — to intuition itself.

Walter Jackson Bate
Clarence Crane Brinton
John Usher Monro
Alwin Max Pappenheimer, Jr.
Samuel Andrew Stouffer
Edgar Bright Wilson, Jr.
Franklin Lewis Ford, *Chairman*

(The Committee wishes to acknowledge its indebtedness to Richard Gordon King, Associate Director of Admissions and Financial Aids in Harvard College. Though not a voting member of the Committee, Mr. King rendered invaluable services as its executive secretary.)